IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

In re Application of:	:	
	:	Group Art Unit: 3623
Brian L. Jackson et al.	:	
	:	Examiner: Romain Jeanty
Appln. No.: 10/033,943	:	
	:	Confirmation No.: 8965
Filed: December 28, 2001	:	
	:	Customer No.: 21967
For: COMPLIANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND METHOD USER TRAFFIC	:	

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APPEAL BRIEF

Sir:

This Appeal Brief is submitted in support of the Notice of Appeal filed December 8, 2006, and in response to the Notice of Panel Decision from Pre-Appeal Brief Review dated January 18, 2007.

REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The Appellants, Brian L. Jackson and Craig E. Bingham, are the Applicants in the above-identified patent application. The Appellants have assigned their entire interest in the above-identified patent application to Basic Resources, Inc., 1601 Bryan St., Dallas, Texas 75201.

RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

The Appellants, the Appellants' legal representative, and the Assignee are not aware of any other appeals or interferences which will directly affect, be directly affected by, or have a bearing on the Board's decision in this Appeal.

STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-41 are pending in the above-identified patent application. Claims 1-41 were finally rejected in an Office Action dated September 8, 2006. The final rejection of Claims 1-41 is hereby appealed.

Claims 1-6, 24-28 and 38-41 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sturgeon et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,726,884). Claims 7-23 and 29-37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sturgeon et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,726,884) in view of Dialog (Santa Fe Pacific Corp.).

STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

No amendments have been filed subsequent to the final rejection of claims 1-41 in the Office Action dated September 8, 2006.

SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

Appellants believe that a brief discussion of the background technology, followed by a brief summary of the embodiments of the claimed invention and the problems solved by the embodiments of the claimed invention, will assist the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences (hereinafter referred to as "the Board") in appreciating the significant advances made by the embodiments of the claimed invention. Finally, concise explanations of each of the independent claims are provided, including reference to exemplary portions of the specification and figures.

Background

In the field of public utilities, and more specifically in the field of natural gas delivery, distribution systems require considerable repair and monitoring to preserve and maintain distribution assets. Additionally, publicly regulated natural gas distribution and delivery systems must comply with regulatory requirements in many aspects of natural gas distribution operations. *See, Page 3, lines 4-10.*

For example, when a leak is detected in a publicly regulated gas distribution system, regulations may require that the leak be repaired within a predetermined time-period.

Furthermore, the repair procedure must be accomplished according to guidelines set by the regulating authority. Such repair procedures may include follow-up monitoring of the leak over a fixed time interval to verify that the repair has been successful. *See, Page 3, lines 11-18.*

Regulatory agencies also require that gas distribution operators provide documentation establishing that these repair procedures conform to the regulatory guidelines. Supporting documentation that the proper procedures were followed is generally provided during routine audits or may be requested by the regulatory authority on-demand and without advanced notice. For this reason, compliance with the myriad of regulatory requirements for natural gas distribution operation is a difficult and time-consuming task. *See, Page 3, lines 19-27.*

Commonly, distribution system management has been accomplished using standardized paper forms promulgated by the regulatory authority. Paper systems, however, are inefficient since they are difficult to store, retrieve and require considerable time to aggregate for regulatory reporting purposes. Previous attempts to streamline the compliance process have included computerization of natural gas distribution line leaks, surveys and monitors. *See, Page 3, line 28 - Page 4, line 4.*

For example, under these prior systems when a leak was detected or reported in a gas distribution line, a computer entry was made to schedule a leak repair within the time period required by the regulating authority. A report detailing the required repair criteria was then timely generated by the computer system and furnished to a technician who would make the repair. *See, Page 4, lines 5-11.*

Based on a computer entry documenting the completion of the repair, the computer system would automatically schedule, according to regulatory requirements, follow-up monitoring to verify that the repair was, in fact, successful at stopping the leak. The computer system was also utilized to schedule natural gas distribution line surveys, again according to regulatory requirements. Survey reports were timely generated by the computer system and furnished to the technician who would physically inspect the pipeline for irregularities or leaks. The data compiled by these prior systems could subsequently be aggregated for reporting to the appropriate regulatory authority. *See, Page 4, lines 12-23.*

A need continues to exist, however, for an improved compliance management system and method for accurately and efficiently managing compliance of a natural gas distribution system. It is to such an improved compliance management system

and method that the claimed invention is directed. *See, Page 4, lines 24-28.*

Embodiments

In one embodiment, the claimed invention is directed to a computerized method for natural gas distribution compliance management. The method includes maintaining a database identifying a plurality of compliance events and a plurality of resources. The method also includes providing a computer system including a main computer and a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer. The main computer may retain at least a portion of a main program and the database. The remote computer may retain a remote program operative to display and modify only a remote portion of the plurality of compliance events and only a remote portion of the plurality of resources of the database. *See, Page 5, lines 2-13.*

The method further includes periodically scanning the database to identify at least one of the plurality of compliance events requiring a response. The method still further includes scanning the database to identify at least one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response. The method still further includes matching at least one of the plurality of resources with the compliance event

requiring the response and scheduling the resource to respond to the compliance event. *See, Page 5, lines 14-22.*

In another embodiment, the claimed invention provides computerized method of managing a compliance event for a natural gas distribution system. The compliance event may include at least one of a cathotic protection event, a danger tags event, a poly-pipe event, an odorant injection event, and a service line scheduling event. The method includes providing a computer system including at least a main computer and a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer. *See, Page 5, lines 23-31.*

The method also includes maintaining a database including the compliance events and a plurality of resources, wherein at least a portion of the database is resident on the main computer. The method further includes periodically scanning the database to identify compliance event requiring a response and scanning the database to identify one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response. *See, Page 6, lines 1-8.*

The method includes scheduling one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response. The method still further includes downloading to the remote computer the schedule of one of the plurality of

resources to respond to the compliance event, and uploading from the remote computer to the main computer a completion information associated with the resource responding to the compliance event. *See, Page 6, lines 9-16.*

In yet another embodiment, the claimed invention provides a compliance management system for managing compliance of a natural gas distribution system. The compliance management system includes a main computer and a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer. The compliance management system further includes a database, a main program and a remote program. *See, Page 6, lines 17-23.*

The database, at least a portion of which is retained by the main computer, includes a plurality of compliance events, a plurality of resources, and a plurality of units, each of the plurality of compliance event and the resources associated with at least one of the plurality of units. The main program on at least the main computer maintains the database. The main program includes a scheduling program for scheduling one of the plurality of resources to perform one of the plurality of compliance events by selecting the resource having the unit substantially similar to the unit associated with the compliance event to be performed. *See, Page 6, lines 24 - Page 7, line, 3.*

The remote program, which is disposed on the remote

computer and accessible by at least one of the plurality of resources, receives from the main computer at least a portion of the compliance event to be performed by the resource. The remote program has an interface operative to display and periodically update the portion of the compliance event to be performed by the resource such that, when the main program is modified to operatively maintain the plurality of compliance events and the plurality of resources, only the interface of the remote program is modified for the interface to operatively display and update the compliance event to be performed by the resource. *See, Page 7, lines 4-15.*

In yet another embodiment, the claimed invention provides a computer readable medium having executable instructions for performing a method for compliance management. The method includes maintaining a database identifying at least one compliance event and a resource, and scanning the database on a periodic basis to determine the compliance event to be performed. *See, Page 7, lines 16-22.*

The method also includes associating the compliance event with the resource to perform the compliance event based upon a unit associated with both the compliance event and the resource. The method further includes scheduling the resource to perform the compliance event. A completion information of the compliance

event is entered based upon completion of the compliance event by the resource and a report is generated including at least one compliance event and a portion of the completion information of the compliance event. *See, Page 7, lines 23-31.*

One advantage of the claimed invention is that the compliance management system provides for efficiently managing every aspect of compliance management related to cathotic protection, danger tags, poly-pipe, odorant injection, and service line scheduling. Another advantage is that the claimed invention provides for easily scheduling these compliance management events, determining and allocating the available resources to perform the compliance event and documenting the compliance process for future reporting purposes. *See, Page 8, lines 1-10.*

Yet another advantage of the claimed invention, by associating the compliance management event with the resource, an available and local resource may be readily determined an allocated to perform the compliance event. Yet another advantage is that the compliance information may be readily and easily aggregated for reporting of numerous aspects of the compliance events for satisfying regulatory reporting requirements. *See, Page 8, lines 11-18.*

Explanation of Independent Claim 1

A computerized method for natural gas distribution compliance management, comprising: (Figures 1-5 ; Page 5, lines 2-4)

maintaining a database identifying a plurality of compliance events and a plurality of resources; (Figures 1-5; Page 5, lines 4-6)

providing a computer system including a main computer and a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer, at least a portion of a main program and the database accessible by the main computer, the remote computer accessing a remote program operative to display and modify only a remote portion of the plurality of compliance events and only a remote portion of the plurality of resources of the database; (Figures 1-5; Page 5, lines 6-13)

periodically scanning the database to identify at least one of the plurality of compliance events requiring a response; (Figures 5, element 106; Page 5, lines 14-16)

scanning the database to identify at least one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response; (Figure 5, element 108; Page 5, lines 16-19)

matching at least one of the plurality of resources with

the compliance event requiring the response; and (Figure 5; Page 5, lines 19-21)

scheduling the resource to respond to the compliance event. (Figure 5, element 110; Page 5, lines 21-22)

Explanation of Independent Claim 24

A computerized method of managing a compliance event for a natural gas distribution system, the compliance event including at least one of a cathotic protection event, a danger tags event, a poly-pipe event, an odorant injection event, and a service line scheduling event, the method comprising: (Figures 1-5; Page 5, lines 24-28)

providing a computer system including at least a main computer and a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer; (Figures 1-5; Page 5, lines 29-31)

maintaining a database including the compliance events and a plurality of resources, at least a portion of the database accessible by the main computer; (Figures 1-5; Page 6, lines 1-4)

periodically scanning the database to identify compliance event requiring a response; (Figure 5, element 106; Page 6, lines 4-5)

scanning the database to identify one of the plurality of

resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response; (Figure 5, element 108; Page 6, lines 6-8)

scheduling one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response; (Figure 5, element 110; Page 6, lines 9-11)

downloading to the remote computer the schedule of one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event; and (Figure 1-5; Page 6, lines 11-13)

uploading from the remote computer to the main computer a completion information associated with the resource responding to the compliance event. (Figures 1-5; Page 6, lines 13-16)

Explanation of Independent Claim 28

A compliance management system for managing compliance of a natural gas distribution system, the compliance management system comprising: (Figures 1-5; Page 6, lines 17-19)

a main computer; (Figure 1; Page 6, line 20)

a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer; (Figure 1; Page 6, lines 20-21)

a database accessible by the main computer, the database including a plurality of compliance events, a plurality of resources, and a plurality of units, each of the plurality of compliance event and the resources associated with at least one

of the plurality of units; (Figures 1-5; Page 6, lines 19-28)

a main program accessible by the main computer for maintaining the database, the main program including a scheduling program for scheduling one of the plurality of resources to perform one of the plurality of compliance events by selecting the resource having the unit substantially similar to the unit associated with the compliance event to be performed; (Figure 4; Page 6, line 24 - Page 7, line 3)

a remote program accessible by the remote computer and accessible by at least one of the plurality of resources for receiving from the main computer at least a portion of the compliance event to be performed by the resource, the remote program having an interface operative to display and periodically update the portion of the compliance event to be performed by the resource such that when the main program is modified to operatively maintain the plurality of compliance events and the plurality of resources, only the interface of the remote program is modified for the interface to operatively display and update the compliance event to be performed by the resource. (Figures 1-5; Page 7, lines 4-15).

Explanation of Independent Claim 38

A computer readable medium having executable instructions for

performing a method for compliance management comprising: (Figures 1-5; Page 7, lines 16-18)

maintaining a database identifying at least one compliance event and a resource; (Figures 1-5; Page 7, lines 19-20)

scanning the database on a periodic basis to determine the compliance event to be performed; (Figure 5, element 106; Page 7, lines 20-22)

associating the compliance event with the resource to perform the compliance event based upon a unit associated with both the compliance event and the resource; (Figures 1-5; Page 7, lines 23-25)

scheduling the resource to perform the compliance event; (Figure 5, element 110; Page 7, lines 26-27)

entering a completion information of the compliance event based upon completion of the compliance event by the resource; and (Figure 5, element 116; Page 7, lines 27-29)

generating a report including at least one compliance event and a portion of the completion information of the compliance event. (Figure 5, element 122; Page 7, lines 29-31)

GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

Claims 1-6, 24-28 and 38-41 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sturgeon et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,726,884).

Claims 7-23 and 29-37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sturgeon et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,726,884) in view of Dialog (Santa Fe Pacific Corp.).

ARGUMENT

The Appellants respectfully appeal the decision of the Examiner to finally reject claims 1-41 of the above-identified patent application. As discussed below, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner has failed to establish a prima facie case of anticipation or obviousness against the appealed claims.

I. THE EXAMINER HAS FAILED TO ESTABLISH A PRIMA FACIE CASE OF ANTICIPATION AGAINST CLAIMS 1-6, 24-28, AND 38-41

On pages 2-6 of the Final Office Action, claims 1-6, 24-28, and 38-41 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sturgeon et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,726,884). This rejection is hereby respectfully traversed.

Under 35 U.S.C. § 102, the Patent Office bears the burden of presenting at least a prima facie case of anticipation. In re

Sun, 31 USPQ2d 1451, 1453 (Fed. Cir. 1993) (unpublished). Anticipation requires that a prior art reference disclose, either expressly or under the principles of inherency, each and every element of the claimed invention. Id.. "In addition, the prior art reference must be enabling." Akzo N.V. v. U.S. International Trade Commission, 808 F.2d 1471, 1479, 1 USPQ2d 1241, 1245 (Fed. Cir. 1986), cert. denied, 482 U.S. 909 (1987). That is, the prior art reference must sufficiently describe the claimed invention so as to have placed the public in possession of it. In re Donohue, 766 F.2d 531, 533, 226 USPQ 619, 621 (Fed. Cir. 1985). Such possession is effected only if one of ordinary skill in the art could have combined the disclosure in the prior art reference with his/her own knowledge to make the claimed invention. Id..

Regarding claims 1, 24, 28, and 38, the Examiner asserts that Sturgeon et al. discloses the claimed inventions. Appellants respectfully disagree for several reasons.

First, the Examiner asserts that Sturgeon et al. discloses scheduling a resource to respond to a compliance event, as claimed. The Examiner, in response to earlier arguments, cites to column 15, line 44 - column 16, line 16. The language cited by the Examiner refers to a hazardous commitment manager ("HCM") functional grouping. "A user may utilize the HCM grouping 61 to

build a safety inspection schedule for periodic (date specific) inspection of fire extinguishers, eye wash stations and decontamination systems for employee work stations." column 15, lines 55-60. Sturgeon, as cited by the Examiner, also discusses "statements of emergency response plans for different classes of emergency releases … [and] emergency equipment that may be needed to respond to an emergency release… ." column 15, line 63 - column 16, line 1. Thus, Sturgeon, at best, allows for the creation of commitments on particular periodic dates and allows for the creation of emergency response plans. Sturgeon does not discuss the scheduling of resources for its commitments. Furthermore, it is clear that emergency response plans do not constitute a scheduling of resources. Emergencies by their very nature are not planned or scheduled, nor does Sturgeon disclose such resource scheduling. At best, Sturgeon discloses the preparation of a plan that lists resources which may be available in the event of an emergency.

In contrast, claims 1, 24, 28, and 38 recite scheduling an appropriate resource to respond to a particular compliance event (e.g., a natural gas line repair, service, inspection, follow-up, etc.). Nowhere does Sturgeon et al. disclose, or even suggest, such a feature. Sturgeon's discussion of commitments is best understood as creating commitments for periodic

inspections. Sturgeon does not discuss allocating resources for these inspections. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Sturgeon et al. fails to disclose, or even suggest, this claimed feature.

It is respectfully submitted that Sturgeon et al. also fails to disclose, or even suggest, a computer system including a main computer and a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer, at least a portion of a main program and the database accessible by the main computer, the remote computer accessing a remote program operative to display and modify only a remote portion of the plurality of compliance events and only a remote portion of the plurality of resources of the database, as claimed. The Examiner points to column 10, lines 39-60, of Sturgeon et al. for a teaching of this claimed feature. However, nowhere in this particular section, or any section, of Sturgeon et al. is this claimed feature disclosed. In contrast, Sturgeon et al. merely discloses dynamic links between functional groupings, which is hardly a teaching of this claimed feature.

The Examiner, in response to earlier arguments, cites to column 23, line 60 - column 24, line 55. The portion cited by the Examiner discusses material safety data sheets (MSDS) and various screens displaying the location of waste and facility

information. The system disclosed by Sturgeon can store information about remote locations and facilities, but there is no disclosure or suggestion that the system contemplates working with a remote computer adapted to communicate with a main computer. A system which contains information about other locations does not disclose or suggest a:

> remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer, at least a portion of a main program and the database accessible by the main computer, the remote computer accessing a remote program operative to display and modify only a remote portion of the plurality of compliance events and only a remote portion of the plurality of resources of the database,

as required by claim 1 or the similar limitations in claims 24 and 28. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Sturgeon et al. also fails to disclose, or even suggest, this claimed feature.

It is respectfully submitted that Sturgeon et al. further fails to disclose, or even suggest, periodically scanning a database to identify at least one of a plurality of compliance events requiring a response, and scanning the database to identify at least one of a plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response, as claimed. The Examiner points to column 49, lines 35-61, of Sturgeon et al. for a teaching of this claimed feature. However, nowhere in

this particular section, or any section, of Sturgeon et al. is this claimed feature disclosed. In contrast, Sturgeon et al. merely discloses identifying an appropriate person or equipment to respond to some future "unplanned" release of hazardous material. Such an "unplanned" event is much different than a current compliance event requiring a response. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Sturgeon et al. also fails to disclose, or even suggest, this claimed feature.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Sturgeon et al. does not disclose, or even suggest, the limitations of claims 1, 24, 28, and 38. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 24, 28, and 38 should be allowable over Sturgeon et al..

Regarding claims 2-6, 25-27, and 39-41, these claims are dependent upon independent claims 1, 24, and 38. Thus, since independent claims 1, 24, and 38 should be allowable as discussed above, claims 2-6, 25-27, and 39-41 should also be allowable at least by virtue of their dependency on independent claims 1, 24, and 38. Moreover, these claims recite additional features which are not disclosed, or even suggested, by Sturgeon et al..

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully requested that the aforementioned anticipation rejection of claims 1-6, 24-28, and 38-41 be overturned.

II. THE EXAMINER HAS FAILED TO ESTABLISH A PRIMA FACIE CASE OF OBVIOUSNESS AGAINST CLAIMS 7-23 AND 29-37

On pages 6-9 of the Final Office Action, claims 7-23 and 29-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sturgeon et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,726,884) in view of Dialog (Santa Fe Pacific Corp.)(hereinafter "Dialog"). This rejection is hereby respectfully traversed.

Under 35 U.S.C. § 103, the Patent Office bears the burden of establishing a prima facie case of obviousness. In re Fine, 837 F.2d 1071, 1074, 5 USPQ2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988). The Patent Office can satisfy this burden only by showing some objective teaching in the prior art or that knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art would lead that individual to combine the relevant teachings of references. Id.. Obviousness cannot be established by combining the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention, absent some teaching or suggestion supporting the combination. ACS Hospital Systems, Inc. v. Montefiore Hospital, 732 F.2d 1572, 1577, 221 USPQ 929, 933 (Fed. Cir. 1984). That is, under 35 U.S.C. § 103, teachings of references can be combined only if there is some

suggestion or motivation to do so. Id.. However, the motivation cannot come from the applicant's invention itself. In re Oetiker, 977 F.2d 1443, 1447, 24 USPQ2d 1443, 1446 (Fed. Cir. 1992). Rather, there must be some reason, suggestion, or motivation found in the prior art whereby a person of ordinary skill in the art would make the combination. Id..

It is respectfully submitted that the obviousness rejection of claims 7-23 and 29-37 has become moot in view of the deficiencies of the primary reference Sturgeon et al. as discussed above with respect to independent claims 1 and 28, respectively. Dependent claims 7-23 and 29-37 are dependent upon independent claims 1 and 28, respectively, and thus inherently incorporate all of the limitations of independent claims 1 and 28, respectively. Also, the secondary reference Dialog fails to disclose, or even suggest, the deficiencies of the primary reference Sturgeon et al. as discussed above with respect to independent claims 1 and 28. Indeed, the Examiner does not even assert such. Thus, the combination of the secondary reference Dialog with the primary reference Sturgeon et al. also fails to disclose, or even suggest, the deficiencies of the primary reference Sturgeon et al. as discussed above with respect to independent claims 1 and 28. Accordingly, claims 7-23 and 29-37 should be allowable over the combination of the

secondary reference Dialog with the primary reference Sturgeon et al. at least by virtue of their dependency on independent claims 1 and 28. Moreover, claims 7-23 and 29-37 recite additional features which are not disclosed, or even suggested, by the cited references taken either alone or in combination. For example, claims 33-35 recite communicating with various types of remote computers. The Examiner admits they are not specifically disclosed. However, the Examiner alleges that they would be obvious in order to send and receive information. As discussed above, Sturgeon et al. fails to disclose communicating with a remote computer. Sturgeon et al. and Dialog, either alone or in combination, fail to disclose, or even suggest, such claimed features, particularly when viewed in combination with the features of independent claims 1 and 28.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of the primary reference Sturgeon et al. with the secondary reference Dialog fails to disclose, or even suggest, the elements of claims 7-23 and 29-37. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claims 7-23 and 29-37 of the present application are not unpatentable over the combination of the primary reference Sturgeon et al. with the secondary reference Dialog, and thus the Examiner has failed in his duty to establish at least a prima facie case of obviousness against

claims 7-23 and 29-37 of the present application. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the obviousness rejection of claims 7-23 and 29-37 be overturned.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner has failed to establish a prima facie case of anticipation or obviousness against the appealed claims. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the final rejection of claims 1-41 is improper and the reversal of same is clearly in order and respectfully requested.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is hereby made.

Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 50-0206, and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. A computerized method for natural gas distribution compliance management, comprising:

maintaining a database identifying a plurality of compliance events and a plurality of resources;

providing a computer system including a main computer and a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer, at least a portion of a main program and the database accessible by the main computer, the remote computer accessing a remote program operative to display and modify only a remote portion of the plurality of compliance events and only a remote portion of the plurality of resources of the database;

periodically scanning the database to identify at least one of the plurality of compliance events requiring a response;

scanning the database to identify at least one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response;

matching at least one of the plurality of resources with the compliance event requiring the response; and

scheduling the resource to respond to the compliance event.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein scheduling the resource to respond to the compliance event further includes:

sending the remote portion of at least one of the plurality of compliance events and the remote portion of at least one of the plurality of resources to the remote computer; and

updating the compliance event with a completion information.

3. The method of Claim 2 wherein the remote computer is associated with at least one of the plurality of resources scheduled to respond to the compliance event and wherein the scheduling of the resource to respond to the compliance event is communicated to the remote computer.

4. The method of Claim 2 wherein the method further includes generating a report including the compliance events scheduled and the completion information.

5. The method of Claim 2 wherein updating the compliance event with the completion information further includes updating a follow-up information associated with the compliance event.

6. The method of Claim 2 wherein matching the resource with the compliance event includes associating a location of the compliance event with a location of the resource.

7. The method of Claim 2 wherein the plurality of compliance events are further defined as a plurality of cathotic protection events.

8. The method of Claim 7 wherein the response is further defined as a date to respond to one of the plurality of cathotic protection events.

9. The method of Claim 7 wherein the response is further defined as a numeric percentage associated with the plurality of cathotic protection events to respond to within a time-interval.

10. The method of Claim 7 wherein the method further comprises generating a report including at least one of the plurality of cathotic protection events responded to and a date the cathotic protection event was responded to by the resource.

11. The method of Claim 2 wherein the plurality of compliance events are further defined as a plurality of danger tag events.

12. The method of Claim 11 wherein the response is further defined as a reported unsafe condition.

13. The method of Claim 11 wherein the method further comprises generating a report including at least one of the plurality of danger tag events responded to by the resource.

14. The method of Claim 2 wherein the plurality of compliance events are further defined as a plurality of service line events.

15. The method of Claim 14 wherein the response is further defined as a date to perform one of the plurality of service line events.

16. The method of Claim 14 wherein the method further includes generating a report including at least one of the plurality of line service events.

17. The method of Claim 2 wherein the plurality of compliance events are further defined as a plurality of poly-pipe events.

18. The method of Claim 17 wherein the response is defined as a date to perform one of the plurality of poly-pipe events.

19. The method of Claim 17 wherein the response is further defined as a numeric percentage associated with the plurality of poly-pipe events to respond to within a time-interval.

20. The method of Claim 17 wherein the method further comprises generating a report including at least one of the plurality of poly-pipe events and a date at least one of the poly-pipe events was responded to by the resource.

21. The method of Claim 2 wherein the plurality of compliance events are further defined as a plurality of odorant injection events.

22. The method of Claim 21 wherein the response is further defined as a date to perform one of the plurality of injection events.

23. The method of Claim 21 wherein the method further comprises generating a report including at least one of the plurality of odorant injection events and a date the odorant injection event was responded to by the resource.

24. A computerized method of managing a compliance event for a

natural gas distribution system, the compliance event including at least one of a cathotic protection event, a danger tags event, a poly-pipe event, an odorant injection event, and a service line scheduling event, the method comprising:

providing a computer system including at least a main computer and a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer;

maintaining a database including the compliance events and a plurality of resources, at least a portion of the database accessible by the main computer;

periodically scanning the database to identify compliance event requiring a response;

scanning the database to identify one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response;

scheduling one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response;

downloading to the remote computer the schedule of one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event; and

uploading from the remote computer to the main computer a completion information associated with the resource responding to the compliance event.

25. The method of Claim 24 wherein the compliance event includes a priority and a unit.

26. The method of Claim 25 wherein periodically scanning the database to identify compliance event requiring a response includes selecting the compliance event requiring a response based upon the priority.

27. The method of Claim 26 wherein identify one of the plurality of resources to respond to the compliance event requiring the response further comprises:

determining the unit associated with the compliance event;

identifying at least one of the plurality of resources associated with the unit of the compliance event requiring the response;

28. A compliance management system for managing compliance of a natural gas distribution system, the compliance management system comprising:

a main computer;

a remote computer adapted to communicate with the main computer;

a database accessible by the main computer, the database including a plurality of compliance events, a plurality of resources, and a plurality of units, each of the plurality of compliance event and the resources associated with at least one of the plurality of units;

a main program accessible by the main computer for maintaining the database, the main program including a scheduling program for scheduling one of the plurality of resources to perform one of the plurality of compliance events by selecting the resource having the unit substantially similar to the unit associated with the compliance event to be performed;

a remote program accessible by the remote computer and accessible by at least one of the plurality of resources for receiving from the main computer at least a portion of the compliance event to be performed by the resource, the remote program having an interface operative to display and periodically update the portion of the compliance event to be performed by the resource such that when the main program is modified to operatively maintain the plurality of compliance events and the plurality of resources, only the interface of the remote program is modified for the interface to operatively display and update the compliance event to be performed by the

resource.

29. The compliance management system of Claim 28 wherein the plurality of compliance events are selected from a group of compliance event consisting of a plurality of cathotic protection events, a plurality of danger tag events, a plurality of poly-pipe events, a plurality of odorant injection events and a plurality of service line scheduling events.

30. The compliance management system of Claim 29 wherein each of the plurality of compliance events have a priority and a unit.

31. The compliance management system of Claim ~~31~~30 wherein the priority of each of the compliance events is associated with a time-frame for responding to the compliance event.

32. The compliance management system of Claim 30 wherein the unit is further defined as one of a plurality of geographical areas associated with each of the plurality of compliance events and resources and wherein the scheduling program is operative to schedule based upon the unit associated with the resources to perform the compliance events.

33. The method of Claim 32 wherein the remote computer further defined as a laptop computer.

34. The method of Claim 32 wherein the remote computer further defined as a personal digital assistant.

35. The method of Claim 32 wherein the remote computer further defined as a wireless device.

36. The method of Claim 35 wherein the wireless device further defined as a wireless telephone.

37. The method of Claim 35 wherein the wireless device further defined as a pager.

38. A computer readable medium having executable instructions for performing a method for compliance management comprising:

maintaining a database identifying at least one compliance event and a resource;

scanning the database on a periodic basis to determine the compliance event to be performed;

associating the compliance event with the resource to

perform the compliance event based upon a unit associated with both the compliance event and the resource;

scheduling the resource to perform the compliance event;

entering a completion information of the compliance event based upon completion of the compliance event by the resource; and

generating a report including at least one compliance event and a portion of the completion information of the compliance event.

39. The computer readable medium of Claim 38 wherein scheduling the resource to perform the compliance event includes:

providing a remote computer associated by the resource;

downloading to the remote computer the schedule of the resource to perform the compliance event;

displaying the schedule of the resource to perform the compliance event; and

performing the compliance event.

40. The computer readable medium of Claim 39 wherein entering the completion information includes:

entering completion information into the remote computer;

providing a main computer, the remote computer adapted to

communicate with the main computer;

transmitting from the remote computer to the main computer the completion information; and

updating the compliance event with the completion information indicative of the compliance event being performed by the resource.

41. The computer readable medium of Claim 39 wherein generating the report includes:

creating a report including at least one of the plurality of compliance events and the completion information associated with at least one of the compliance events;

printing the report on the main computer.

EVIDENCE APPENDIX

[NONE]

RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

[NONE]